

**Support of HB 6664** An Act Managing Waste and Creating a Waste Authority

To: Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee,

I write to you today as a scientist, mother, transplant from Ohio, and co-chair of the Sustainable Essex committee, urging you to strongly consider supporting HB 6664.

Our committee hosts a town-wide, volunteer-led litter cleanup once a year in conjunction with the Connecticut River Conservancy. This past year, 39% of the litter we cleaned up was plastic over the course of **2 hours** from the Connecticut River and surrounding areas, **over 280 lbs**. This included 71 plastic grocery bags, despite the fact that they are banned in CT. What a shame that volunteers are left to pick up the mess, and municipalities, such as Essex, with the burden of paying for their proper disposal.

Speaking of disposal, it is unbelievable to me that we ship our waste to landfills in PA and OH. Not only do CT citizens pay for plastic packaging, but they pay to dispose of it through tipping fees, and then pay the costs of greenhouse gases emitted by trucking that trash two states away! Other states, *ones that grow our food*, should not be paid to take our trash; we need to take responsibility for it by stopping it at its source.

This was the second year we performed the town-wide cleanup. Partially in response to last year's cleanup, we hypothesized that maybe we would pick up less thin-film plastic litter if we made it easier to recycle. Therefore, we started collecting recyclable thin-film plastics at the Essex and Ivoryton libraries, where dedicated volunteers would then pick up the plastic and drop it off at a grocery store for pick-up by a collector. Since we started this program in April 2022, we have collected **500 lbs of thin-film plastics** for recycling. To demonstrate the scope, I fill up my SUV with just 20 lb of baled, thin-film plastic; this stuff is deceiving.

These numbers are for one small town in Connecticut, with a dedicated group of volunteers.

Imagine all the plastic waste littered and un-recycled across the state.

Disposable plastic has infiltrated every segment of our lives because it is cheap to make from abundant oil and gas. As the world transitions to renewable energy, the oil industry's plan B is single-use plastics. This point is important, because despite what the Plastic industry claims, they have NO financial interest in recycling or encouraging recycling of plastic because of the availability of cheap virgin plastic. **This must be legislated.**

Perhaps the market for post-consumer recycled content will fix the problem, eventually, **with mandated levels (please keep)**. However, the market created the cheap plastic problem in the first place, and haulers to scoop it up (**who will continue to do so with more effective recycling education, outlined in the bill**).

Essex is also leading the way in Connecticut with food scrap collection. Our transfer station accepts food scraps to be hauled, and **the municipality** is paying for food scraps to be hauled away from the elementary school. Please continue supporting **mandated** food scrap recycling as outlined in this bill. This will incentivize creation of a regional business to properly compost the food scraps, something the Lower Connecticut River Valley, *desperately* needs.

Your committee must legislate on this issue and join four other states, and numerous countries, that already have strong packaging EPR programs. The earlier we enact this legislation, the earlier we will have a true impact on reducing greenhouse gases, educate more residents to properly recycle, and can pioneer a consumer culture of reduced waste that will ripple across the United States.

Thank you for your consideration,

Katie Digianantonio, Ph.D. (Essex, CT)